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ABSTRACT

To help principals improve as reading leaders, teachers should first provide them with feedback. Although informal comments are important to administrators, teachers' formal feedback in a survey or questionnaire helps to objectify the evaluation process and to provide principals with a more complete picture. Specifically, teachers can call to administrators' attention strengths and weaknesses that affect their reading leadership, and this type of feedback increases the chances of enhancing their performance and also improving their relationship with teachers. A review of the professional literature suggests that specific efforts to have teachers evaluate reading leaders are almost nonexistent. Teachers and principals who are interested in implementing such an evaluation might: (1) form a language arts advisory council; (2) develop a rationale for evaluating reading leaders; (3) review the professional literature; (4) use related literature to establish goals; (5) develop a survey to determine the degree to which the reading leadership goals are attained; (6) distribute the survey to the entire faculty; and (7) tabulate results in a way that assures confidentiality. (A survey for teacher evaluation of reading leaders is attached.) (RS)

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ED 370 092

Improving Administrative Performance through Teacher Evaluation

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Building principals and others serving as reading leaders can have a major impact on our students' growth in reading and writing. The substance, humanism, and style they bring to daily decision-making can mean the difference between productive or mediocre language arts outcomes. To help principals improve as reading leaders, we should first provide them with feedback. Although our informal comments are important to administrators, our formal feedback in the form of a survey or questionnaire helps to objectify the evaluation process and to provide principals with a more complete picture. Specifically, we can call to their attention strengths and weaknesses that affect their reading leadership, and this type of feedback increases the chances of enhancing their performance and also improving their relationship with teachers.

What examples are available?

Regrettably, my review of the professional literature suggests that specific efforts to have teachers evaluate reading leaders are almost nonexistent; however, books, articles, and instruments concerning general aspects of evaluating administrative performance are available. For example, in Performance Appraisal of School Management (Lancaster, PA: Technomic, 1992), Donald Langlois and Richard McAdams focus on the importance of evaluating the leadership team. A necessary but controversial part of this process is for teachers to evaluate their principals. Not surprisingly, although about

86 percent of our school systems have formal approaches for evaluating administrators, only 14 percent permit teachers to evaluate their principals.

Of the procedures that do exist, Allan Vann, a building administrator, uses a principal's report card as a source of formal feedback from his teachers. Writing in the March 1989 issue of the journal Principal, Vann describes his report card which consists of (1) factors and qualities of effective schools, including being knowledgeable about and supporting the curriculum, (2) personal characteristics like fairness, honesty, and dedication, (3) specific programs, policies, and practices, such as placing professional literature in the faculty room, and (4) comments about how to handle controversial issues, including formally observing classroom performance for up to 3 hours. After analyzing the results, Vann responds personally to teachers who sign their names on the report card, posts the results in the faculty room, and discusses the results at faculty meetings.

A more comprehensive approach involving districtwide efforts is described in the January 1991 Journal of School Leadership. Coauthors W. Richard Garrett and Jack Flanigan discuss the principal evaluation model which fulfills both a local need and a state mandate of South Carolina's Education Improvement Act. The purpose of this approach is twofold: to improve instruction and to reward high performing principals. The process involves a school needs assessment survey, a school gain index, a portfolio documenting the principal's

accomplishments, and an individual school innovation component. Within this context, teachers, parents, and central office administrators evaluate the performance of building principals while focusing on such criteria as leadership; student development and achievement; staff selection, evaluation, and development; interpersonal competence; school/community relations; school climate; and personal/professional development. Each criterion is represented by several descriptors; for example, leadership includes "involves all audiences in problem solving" and interpersonal competence includes "recognizes and manages conflict."

Evaluating reading leadership

These efforts certainly help us realize the diverse roles effective principals are expected to perform; however, they do not increase our awareness of how principals improve reading programs. My criticism is not meant to lessen the importance of global aspects of leadership but rather to complement principals' perspective with a sensitivity to reading and the other language arts. This position is necessary because a communications-oriented school supports success across the curriculum.

Unfortunately, the only professional literature I could find concerning teacher evaluation of reading leadership is an article I wrote in the January 1977 Journal of Reading.

This article focuses on a Long Island (N.Y.) school district's efforts to upgrade its reading programs by having teachers evaluate their principals' effectiveness in such areas as administration and supervision, staff development, program concerns, individualization, relationship with staff, and relationship with community. Efforts of this type are worth considering because they provide administrators with feedback concerning their leadership performance in the reading program.

Teachers and principals who are interested in implementing this innovation might focus on the following strategies:

- Form a language arts advisory council consisting of administrators and teachers. Parents may be invited to present their concerns and to offer their support; however, they should immediately be made aware that they will not be privy to the results of the evaluation.

- Develop a rationale for evaluating reading leaders. Included is a perspective that evaluation has helped us improve our performance in the clasasroom and that common sense should drive us to a process that supports similar improvement in reading leadership. In addition, today's thrust toward shared decision-making, a dominant force in U.S. education, is another reason for seriously considering mutual evaluation. Furthermore, realizing the positive or negative impact reading leaders can have on the instructional program and knowing teachers are in the best position to observe this impact provide us with

the impetus to carry out this innovation.

- Review the professional literature to determine important aspects of leadership that are linked to the reading field. For example, motivating parents to support their children's reading efforts and organizing staff development sessions to promote reading and writing across the curriculum are recognized qualities of reading leaders.

- Use the related literature to establish goals. Among the forces that should be driving us are insights gained from our professional reading. These insights have practical value if we apply them to our school district's philosophy of education and if this blending results in the development of reading leadership goals. Thus,part of the philosophy is likely to state a commitment to helping all students reach their potential as readers and writers. Although this statement is general--typical of most school philosophies--it can be structured as one of several reading leadership goals: The principal will guide classroom teachers to incorporate the teaching of reading and writing into their content areas.

- Develop a survey to determine the degree to which the reading leadership goals are attained. This task is specific and time-consuming, but the outcomes are rewarding. Our roles include reviewing each goal carefully, writing survey items that relate directly to each goal, and revising the instrument several times.

To provide for validation, we can ask teachers and administrators to make constructive comments about the survey. We also may send the instrument to noted authorities on reading leadership, such as Sidney Rauch, and ask them for critical feedback. Our next role is to consider these responses as we revise the survey again. Then, we can randomly select teachers to use it on a pilot basis.

- Distribute the survey to the entire faculty with an accompanying letter, reviewing its purposes and providing directions for completing it. In the March 1986 issue of Executive Educator, Langlois reminds us that this process works effectively at a faculty meeting. His advice to principals is to tell teachers that the results of the survey will be used to open communication, enhance leadership performance, and improve awareness of staff needs. Principals also are advised to leave the faculty room while the forms are being completed and to have a reliable teacher collect the completed forms. Figure 1 is an example of an instrument teachers can use for evaluating their reading leaders. This survey does not consider all aspects of reading-related matters; instead, it focuses on important leadership qualities. Practitioners should consider changing the categories and the list of items that represents them, but these modifications should be based on local needs and wants.

- Tabulate results in a way that assures confidentiality.

We are more likely to maintain credibility in how we handle the process if principals have options, such as tabulating the results themselves or having the language arts advisory council do the tabulation. We also can make this process a rewarding one by respecting the principals' way of handling the findings. For example, they may review the findings in the privacy of their office, discuss them at a faculty meeting, or post them in the faculty lounge. Regardless of the approach taken, most principals who are working with reasonable faculties will value the feedback and use it to improve reading leadership performance.

Our Mission in retrospect

Teacher evaluation of reading leadership is an important process. It can help principals improve their performance in literacy education, and this energy can lead to positive effects across the curriculum. Our chances of successfully implementing this innovation are increased when we form a language arts advisory council and cooperatively enjoy worthwhile activities. These include developing a rationale, reviewing the professional literature, and establishing related goals. Afterward, we can develop and administer a survey to determine the effectiveness of our reading leaders. Finally, tabulating the results with confidentiality and respecting the administrastors' way of handling the findings provide further support for our mission of improving reading leadership and its impact on students'

literacy learning.

Figure 1

A survey for teacher evaluation of reading leaders

Administrator's Name_____School_____Date_____

This survey concerns leadership qualities in reading-related matters. Please use the following scale when responding to the items:

0 = I do not have enough information about the item

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly agree

After each category, please make comments.

Staff Development

1. The administrator works cooperatively with the staff to plan workshops that support language arts improvement goals. 0 1 2 3 4
2. The workshops stress cooperative sharing/ social cohesion. 0 1 2 3 4
3. Activities focus on integrating writing/ reading/talking/listening. 0 1 2 3 4

4. Participants are exposed to approaches that can be transferred to content area classrooms. 0 1 2 3 4

5. Such transfer is nurtured by coaching from peers or experts. 0 1 2 3 4

6. The administrator attends the staff development sessions. 0 1 2 3 4

Comments_____

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Sustaining Innovations

1. The administrator shares valuable information with teachers as a first step toward building a foundation for reading innovations. 0 1 2 3 4

2. Teachers are involved in all phases of carrying out the innovations, including

   A. determining a need 0 1 2 3 4

   B. organizing staff development workshops 0 1 2 3 4

   C. agreeing on the most useful strategies that support lasting efforts 0 1 2 3 4

   D. developing assessment techniques 0 1 2 3 4

   E. engaging in decision-making concerning the budget 0 1 2 3 4

3. The administrator works with district office staff to maintain a budget item for reading

innovations that are protected against future cuts. 0 1 2 3 4

Comments_____

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Curriculum and Instruction

1. The administrator and teachers are immersed in language arts curriculum development. 0 1 2 3 4
2. Faculty meetings are partly used to discuss language application/communication in the content areas. 0 1 2 3 4
3. Every attempt is made to involve teachers in developing their own teaching schedules so that their instructional expertise is highlighted. 0 1 2 3 4
4. Detracked, or heterogeneous, classes dominate the instructional pattern of organization. 0 1 2 3 4
5. Teachers are encouraged to use flexible intra-class grouping (for example, cooperative learning groups, strategy groups, or skill groups). 0 1 2 3 4
6. Teachers are guided to incorporate thematic units in content area classes. 0 1 2 3 4
7. Mutual planning time is arranged for learning center specialists and classroom teachers to provide congruent instruction for at-risk students. 0 1 2 3 4

8. The administrator guides individual teachers to integrate writing/reading/talking/listening strategies across the curriculum. 0 1 2 3 4

Comments_____

_____

Controversial Materials

1. The administrator supports the use of controversial materials to promote critical/creative thinking. 0 1 2 3 4
2. Resources concerning the following topics are considered:
   - A. alcohol 0 1 2 3 4
   - B. drugs 0 1 2 3 4
   - C. ethnic/racial groups 0 1 2 3 4
   - D. politics 0 1 2 3 4
   - E. religion 0 1 2 3 4
   - F. sex 0 1 2 3 4
   - G. strong language 0 1 2 3 4
   - H. violence 0 1 2 3 4
3. Selected materials collectively represent a variety of perspectives rather than a single point of view. 0 1 2 3 4
4. Resources are well-matched with students' maturity level. 0 1 2 3 4

5. A procedure for dealing with materials that are challenged by the community is working effectively. 0 1 2 3 4

6. The administrator articulates the need for controversial materials through sensitive presentations to pertinent audiences (for example,students, faculty, parents, and board of education). 0 1 2 3 4

Comments_____

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Lifetime Literacy

1. The administrator promotes the lifetime reading habit. 0 1 2 3 4

2. The use of classroom libraries or library corners is highlighted. 0 1 2 3 4

3. Reading for pleasure in the classroom is considered a major instructional activity. 0 1 2 3 4

4. Teachers are encouraged to serve as reading role models during classroom recreational reading. 0 1 2 3 4

5. Teachers are expected to read aloud to students on a regular basis. 0 1 2 3 4

6. Literature-based materials (for example, "real books") are used as dominant instructional resources. 0 1 2 3 4

7. Certain faculty meetings are used for updating the staff about current professional literature on lifetime literacy. 0 1 2 3 4

8. The administrator visits content area classrooms and motivates lifetime literacy efforts by reading aloud, doing booktalks, discussing current events articles, or becoming involved in other pertinent activities. 0 1 2 3 4

Comments_____

_____

Assessment

1. The administrator supports a variety of assessment techniques that are well-matched with instructional goals. 0 1 2 3 4

2. Teachers are guided to assess students' reading/writing/study performance through such approaches as

   A. observing learners 0 1 2 3 4

   B. holding individual conferences 0 1 2 3 4

   C. asking key questions 0 1 2 3 4

   D. encouraging students to ask their own questions 0 1 2 3 4

   E. responding to individuals' dialogue journals 0 1 2 3 4

   F. conducting running records for the purpose of analyzing miscues 0 1 2 3 4

3. Portfolio assessment complements other approaches to assessment. 0 1 2 3 4

4. The report card represents authentic assessment (for example, a rubric). 0 1 2 3 4

5. The administrator's observations/ evaluations of content area teachers help them to improve the link between assessment and instruction. 0 1 2 3 4

Comments_____

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Hiring Qualified Teachers

1. The administrator supports the hiring of reading-oriented content area teachers. 0 1 2 3 4

2. These teachers are selected by a committee (for example, classroom teachers, reading teachers, library media specialists, administrators, supervisors, parents, and students). 0 1 2 3 4

3. The committee interviews candidates whose backgrounds are reasonably matched with the school's reading-oriented mission. 0 1 2 3 4

4. The committee visits the schools in which the candidates are currently employed and observes their accomplishments firsthand. 0 1 2 3 4

5. The administrator attempts to retain newly appointed reading-oriented teachers (both

novice and experienced) by providing them with reading mentors during their initial years of service. 0 1 2 3 4

Comments_____

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The Community

1. The administrator communicates effectively with parents about the school's literacy learning efforts. 0 1 2 3 4
2. Parents are encouraged to work closely with the school to promote better instructional programs. 0 1 2 3 4
3. The administrator guides parents to use strategies at home (for example, Paired Reading) to support their children's reading growth. 0 1 2 3 4

Comments_____

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Additional comments to improve the administrator's reading leadership performance_____

_____

Additional comments to improve this survey_____

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